

WorkFirst Reform Partnership Training

*Child Support
April 2006*

Governor Gregoire's Directive

- Renewed sense of mission.
- Reform the program to achieve better success for parents through community partnerships to weave a tighter safety net.
- WorkFirst must improve and provide supports to help parents find jobs and keep jobs, including child care.
- Parents must participate in the program or lose support
- The state will use Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) to oversee the program's results and outcomes.

WorkFirst Values

- Work is the best avenue to break the cycle of poverty for families.
- Parents have a responsibility to take care of and provide for their children.
- The community, with the support of the state, has a responsibility to help low-income families.
- Every citizen in the state has the responsibility for the safety of our children.
- We all must be accountable in carrying out our parts of the program if we are to achieve success.

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Overview

Child support can provide an important financial resource to single-parent families moving toward self-sufficiency through WorkFirst. WorkFirst reform places a renewed emphasis on *both* parents having responsibility to take good care of and provide for their children. Consistent and adequate child support payments can avoid the risk of a family not being financially self-sufficient. Renewed awareness, enhanced cooperation and increased quality of referral information to the Division of Child Support (DCS) by WorkFirst partners are important to assist WorkFirst clients in becoming self-sufficient.

Child Support Services

DCS offers a variety of services to custodial and non-custodial parents. In addition to collecting child support, DCS helps parents establish and modify child support orders, establish paternity, and ensure private medical insurance is provided for children whenever possible.

Having a legal child support is important. Washington ranks 3rd in the nation in the percent of cases with child support orders. In January 2006, 89.5% of all cases statewide had orders established, but of the cases where the custodial parent is in WorkFirst or has been in the past 12 months, only 74% have orders DCS can collect on.

How can I help WorkFirst participants get child support?

A complete electronic referral with as much information about the noncustodial parent as possible is the first step toward establishment and enforcement of an order. Complete information allows DCS to move forward without delay to establish orders and collect support. An incomplete electronic referral delays the collection of child support.

Through collaboration, improved communication, training, and system improvements between CSD and DCS, we are working together to improve electronic referrals for WorkFirst clients. The goal of these improvements is to increase rates of establishment and collection for these families which in turn should help move them towards self-sufficiency.

How can child support help me help WorkFirst participants?

Child support payments may provide opportunities to divert clients from cash assistance. Child support payments, when combined with wages may eliminate the need for WorkFirst cash assistance. DCS staff are available to answer questions and assist clients – each Community Services Office and LPA has a DCS liaison to help!